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Message Text

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QUOTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L LON
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FOR AF - DICK MOOSE FROM LOW

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV, RH, ZA
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH MARK CHONA: CUBAN
PRESENCE IN ZAMBIA

SUMMARY. IN A LENGTHY CONVERSATION WITH MARK CHONA, I DISCUSSED THE IMPACT IN THE US OF PUBLIC DISCUSSION BY THE ZAMBIANS OF POSSIBLE RECOURSE TO CUBAN ASSISTANCE. HIS DISCRIPTION OF THE ZAMBIAN APPROACH INDICATED AN APPEAL FOR CUBAN HELP WOULD ONLY BE CONFIDENTIAL

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MADE TO HELP DEFEND ZAMBIA AFTER FURTHER ATTACKS FROM RHODESIA AND AFTER THE WEST HAD ALSO BEEN ASKED FOR ASSISTANCE. CHONA INDICATED SENSITIVITY TO THE PROBLEM. WE ALSO DISCUSSED THE CURRENT STATE OF RHODESIA NEGOTIATIONS AND CHONA MENTIONED THAT KAUNDA MIGHT TRY TO ACT AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE US AND ANGOLA DURING THE VISIT. END SUMMARY

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1. IN MY SECOND CONVERSATION WITH CHONA ON MAY 11 I SAID I WANTED TO TALK TO HIM FRANKLY ABOUT A DIFFICULT ISSUE. I MENTIONED THE DAVID MARTIN OBSERVER ARTICLE AND SAID THAT IT HAD CREATED A REACTION IN THE US WHICH WAS NOT HELPFUL TO ZAMBIA'S FRIENDS. CHONA PASSED OFF DAVID MARTIN AS IRRESPONSIBLE. HE SAID THE PRESIDENT NO LONGER WOULD SEE MARTIN AND ONLY DID SO ON THIS OCCASION BECAUSE HE CAME IN WITH COLIN LEGUM.

2. CHONA EXPLAINED AT LENGTH THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE CUBANS. HE DESCRIBED FOUR POINTS. FIRST, HE SAID, THE ETHIOPIANS HAD EVERY RIGHT TO CALL IN HELP FROM A FRIENDLY POWER TO PROTECT ITS TERRITORY AGAINST AN EXTERNAL AGGRESSION. THE US WAS ALSO CORRECT IN CALLING FOR SOMALI WITHDRAWAL FROM THE OGADEN. HOWEVER, IF THE ETHIOPIANS ATTACKED SOMALIA, IT ALSO HAD A RIGHT TO CALL ON EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE FOR ITS PROTECTION. SECOND, CHONA SAID, IN RHODESIA THE PATRIOTIC FRONT WAS DOING MUCH BETTER THAN PEOPLE RECOGNIZED. ZAMBIAN DEFENSE FORCE COMMANDER ZUZE HAD TOLD CHONA THE PREVIOUS DAY THAT HE WAS QUITE SATISFIED WITH PF'S PERFORMANCE. ALMOST ALL THE RECENT ACTIONS WERE CARRIED OUT BY ZAPU WHICH WAS PROVING ITSELF VERY CONFIDENTIAL

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EFFECTIVE. (WE ARE VERY SKEPTICAL OF THIS INFORMATION.) THERE WAS NO NEED OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE. NEITHER THE PF, MOZAMBIQUE, ZAMBIAN NOR TANZIA FELT THAT FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT WAS DESIRABLE. THIRD, MATERIAL SUPPORT FROM THE SOVIETS AND CHINESE WOULD CONTINUE AND INCREASE IN QUANTITY AND SOPHISTICATION AS THE NEED AROSE. FOURTH, THERE WAS ALREADY FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT ON THE RHODESIAN SIDE. SMITH DEPENDED IN A MAJOR WAY ON MERCENARY SUPPORT. BEYOND THAT ZAMBIA HAD INCONTROVERTIBLE EVIDENCE THAT THERE WAS SUBSTANTIAL SOUTH AFRICAN INVOLVEMENT IN PLANNING AND EXECUTING THE RHODESIAN INCURSIONS OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY (AT A LATER POINT CHONA SAID HE ALSO HAD FIRM EVIDENCE OF ISRAELI SUPPORT FOR SMITH). IF ANOTHER ATTACK ON ZAMBIA OCCURRED, LIKE THE MARCH 4TH INCURSION INTO LUANGWA, ZAMBIA WOULD HAVE TO TAKE MEASURES TO PROTECT ITSELF. IT KNEW THAT WHEN IT CAME DOWN TO IT NEITHER THE BRITISH NOR THE AMERICANS WOULD COME TO THEIR HELP. THEY WOULD HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO APPEAL TO THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS. THIS, HE SAID, WAS THE MEANING OF WHAT THE PRESIDENT WAS TRYING TO SAY.

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3. I SAID THAT THE AMERICAN PRESS WOULD QUESTION THE PRESIDENT CLOSELY ON THIS SUBJECT. SOME OF IT WAS NOT FRIENDLY AND WOULD TRY TO WRING FROM HIM A STATEMENT OF THE KIND CONTAINED IN THE MARTIN ARTICLE. THAT COULD HARM OUR EFFORTS TO CONTINUE TO HELP ZAMBIA AND BRING A SOLUTION FOR ZIMBABWE. I SAID I THOUGHT THERE WAS A GOOD CHANCE THAT WE COULD MAKE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN OUR RHODESIA NEGOTIATIONS IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS AND THAT SMITH WOULD HAVE GREAT DIFFICULTY HOLDING ON BEYOND THE END OF THE YEAR. IF WE PROCEEDED WITH ZAMBIAN AND OTHER FRONTLINE HELP, WE COULD BRING OUR NEGOTIATIONS ALONG AND RENDER A MILITARY SOLUTION UNNECESSARY.
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I ASKED CHONA WHETHER IT WAS THIS KIND OF HELP TOWARDS AN ULTIMATE SOLUTION WHICH HE WAS SEEKINQ. HE ANSWERED EMPHATICALLY THAT IT WAS, ALTHOUGH AT A DIFFERENT POINT IN THE CONVERSATION HE INDICATED THAT ZAMBIA WOULD ALSO BE SEEKING SPECIFIC ARMS ASSISTANCE, AND HE INDICATED THE KIND OF HELP THEY WOULD WANT.

4. CHONA SAID THAT KAUNDA AND NYERERE HAD BEEN DISTURBED BY INDICATIONS THAT WE DID NOT CONSIDER DAR HAD MADE MUCH PROGRESS. THEY FELT ON THE CONTRARY THAT IT HAD BEEN A GREAT SUCCESS AND THAT THE REMAINING DIFFERENCES WERE PURELY OF A TACTICAL NATURE. WE SHOULD CONTINUE OUR PROGRESS IN THIS DIRECTION, HE SAID, AND IT WAS AT THAT STAGE THAT HE MENTIONED THAT THEY WERE PREPARED TO WORK WITH MUZOREWA AS WE HAD SUGGESTED (REF LUSAKA TEL 1698).

5. I SAID I THOUGHT THAT WITHIN THREE OR FOUR WEEKS IT WOULD BECOME APPARENT TO SMITH WHETHER OR NOT THE SAFE RETURN POLICY WAS WORKING. IF, AS I SUSPECTED, IT DID NOT, HE WOULD HAVE THREE CHOICES: PROLONG THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENT, TURN OVER POWER WITHOUT AN ELECTION, OR SEEK A NEW AGREEMENT. I SAID I KNEW HE BELIEVED THAT SMITH WOULD CHOOSE THE FIRST OF THESE ALTERNATIVES IN AN ATTEMPT TO MAINTAIN HIMSELF LONGER IN POWER. I PERSONALLY DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THAT WOULD BE POSSIBLE BEYOND THE END OF THE YEAR, AND OF THE REMAINING TWO ALTERNATIVES I THOUGHT IT LIKELY THAT A NEW AGREEMENT COULD BE WORKED OUT BASED ON OUR DEVELOPING PROPOSAL AND FINALIZED IN AN ALL-PARTIES MEETING. CHONA SAID ZAMBIA WAS FULLY PREPARED TO WORK WITH
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US IN THIS DIRECTION.

6. CHONA RETURNED AT ANOTHER TO THE IDEA THAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD HAVE TO MAKE A DECISION SHORTLY ON THE CUBAN MATTER. I SAID I THOUGHT I HAD UNDERSTOOD HIM TO SAY THAT HE WOULD NOT DO SO UNLESS IT WAS FORCED UPON HIM BY STRONG ATTACKS FROM RHODESIA AND APPEALS TO HELP TO THE WEST WHICH HAD GONE UNANSWERED. CHONA SAID THE PRESIDENT COULD NOT WAIT THAT LONG. HE HAD TO DO SOME CONTINGENCY PLANNING AND DECIDE W/HETHER OR NOT HE WOULD HAVE TO PREPARE HIMSELF TO ACCEPT CUBAN DEFENSE FORCES.

7. THE CONVERSATION WENT ON AT SOME LENGTH, RETURNING TO THE PROBLEM OF CUBANS. CHONA REFERRED TO THE UNDESIRABILITY OF A CUBAN BELT ACROSS AFRICA FROM ANGOLA TO MOZAMBIQUE. HOWEVER HE SAID HE HAD KNOWN SINCE 1965 THAT THEY WOULD HAVE TO CALL THE SOVIETS IN TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE IN THE END, BUT THEN RECOGNIZED THAT THIS WAS NOT THE KIND OF STATEMENT WHICH WOULD BE HELPFUL. HE ENDED THE CONVERSATION BY SAYINT THAT HE AND PRESIDENT KAUNDA UNDERSTAND THAT THEY MUST HELP THEIR FRIENDS IN THE U.S.

8. CHONA ALSO MENTIONED IN PASSING THAT KAUNDA WOULD BRING UP THE SUBJECT OF ANGOLA WITH PRESIDNET CARTER AND THAT THEY PLANNED TO RETURN FROM NEW YORK VIA LUANDA. I HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT PRESIDENT KAUNDA INTENDS TO TRY TO DO SOME BRIDGEBUILDING.

9. THE DAY BEFORE AT LUNCH I HAD A SHORT, PRIVATE CHAT WITH AGRICULTURE MINISTER ALEX CHIKWANDA WHO IS BOTH FRIENDLY AND POLITICALLY SENSITIVE. HE SAID HE RECOGNIZED THE PROBLEMS WHICH OVERPLAYING THE CUBAN ISSUE COULD CREATE AND, WITHOUT MY ASKING, SAID HE INTENDED TO WARN THE PRESIDENT
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ON THE SUBJECT.

10. ONE FINAL POINT. I BELIEVE THAT MRS. KAUNDA'S INABILITY TO ACCOMPANY THE PRESIDENT BECAUSE OF HER INCREASINGLY SERIOUS DISBETES PROBLEM IS NOT ONLY

A GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT TO THE PRESIDENT AND HIS

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PARTY BUT MAY BE A MATTER OF SOME CONCERN TO HIM.
MRS. KAUNDA ALWAYS ACCOMPANIES HIM ON THESE TRIPS
AND PROVIDES A BALANCE TO HIM WHICH WILL BE SORELY
MISSED ON THIS OCCASION.

COMMENT: THE LENGTHY CONVERSATION WAS A JUMBLE OF
CONFUSED, CONTRADICTORY AND SOMETIMES DOWNRIGHT UNTRUE
STATEMENTS. IN SPITE OF THIS, I BELIEVE THAT CHONA
AND THE PRESIDENT ARE WELL AWARE OF THE DANGERS OF
OVERPLAYING THE CUBAN ISSUE IN THE UNITED STATES. AS
I HAVE SAID IN EARLIER REPORTS, I BELIEVE THEY ARE
VOICING FEARS RATHER THAN INTENTIONS AND THAT THEY
ARE SEEKING REASSURANCE RATHER THAN FIRM COMMITMENTS
OF MILITARY INVOLVEMENT OR SANCTIONS APPLICATION.
WE WILL NOT KNOW FULLY UNTIL KAUNDA'S ACTUAL
CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT CARTER. I BELIEVE THAT A
COMBINATION OF PERSONAL ASSURANCES, CONCRETE PLANS TO
PROCEED WITH THE ANGLO-AMERICAN NEGOTIATIONS AND ALL-
PARTIES CONFERENCE, ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AND SOME
SUGGESTIONS IN THE MILITARY FIELD WOULD ALLOW THE
PRESIDENT TO RETURN FULLY REASSURED. BREWSTER UNQUOTE
VANCE

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